

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
Milwaukee VA Medical Center



# Women's Health

---

NEWSLETTER FOR WOMEN VETERANS

Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center **5000 West National Avenue** Milwaukee, WI





On June 12, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed into law the Women's Armed Services Act allowing women to be regular members in the military. Over seven decades later, Governor Tony Evers signed a proclamation to officially recognize June 12, 2019, as Women Veterans Day. It is fitting we celebrate the first Women's Health Newsletter as this historic date approaches.

Today, women stand shoulder to shoulder with men in all operations. Women in the Armed forces have made a lasting contribution to our country. As your frontline healthcare providers, we hear your stories. Your bravery and sacrifice impact our country and the world greatly. In turn, you all have positively impacted your health care team.





We'd like to welcome you to our new newsletter created especially for our Women Veterans.

The VA Women's Health program strives to meet your diverse and special needs. We offer Women's health specialty clinics, timely health care, outreach programs, and events.

We are inspired to serve you every day as part of our mission. We honor you as a diverse, brave, and resilient community of female Veterans.



**SHE SERVED**  
SO THAT WE COULD LIVE FREE

It is our honor to serve as your  
healthcare providers

*Happy Women  
Veterans Day!*

We asked several of our team members the question, ***"What inspires you most about our Women Veterans?"*** Their responses could not be more supportive:

- "I'm inspired by their strength and resilience. They encourage me to be strong in the face of adversity...to keep pushing forward."
- "They are hardworking, strong, courageous, and selfless."
- "What inspires me is their ability to do it all. To stand next to men and do the same job."
- "I enjoy their take-charge enthusiasm for their health care."
- They are..."Stronger than the average woman."
- "They had the courage to fight for their country and what they believe in."
- "Women are now valued as much as our male Veterans. They go through the same training and can now hold higher job positions. Some experience sexual trauma and soldier on with their heads held high."
- "Women Veterans show the same bravery and strength as men. Amazing!"
- "Although having experienced trauma, they still come here with a positive attitude."
- They have..."Strength and courage... they are our heroes."
- "Hearing about their experiences inspires me to be my best self. This motivates me to continue working hard for our women Veterans."





### New Women's Health Coordination Team

We are your new health coordination team. Our focus is a seamless transition from your in-house care to community services. The team works with providers to address all aspects of your care. This includes patient education, chart updates, appointments, and follow-up on abnormal test results.

We help you navigate a sometimes complex medical system. From mammograms to maternity care coordination, our goal is safe, high quality and effective health care.

### Gynecology Services

Our comprehensive Gynecology clinic offers help for a wide range of health issues:

- Abnormal uterine bleeding
- Pelvic pain
- Contraception
- Gynecologic cancers
- Menopausal support (hormone replacement therapy)
- In-house infertility care
- Follow-up for abnormal cervical cancer screenings
- Referrals to community infertility specialists for further testing and treatment if needed

Veterans interested in gynecology services should contact their VA care provider.



**Our Milwaukee VA team**  
**from L to R:**  
Santos Olmo,  
Ericka Johnson,  
Jessica Klink,  
Kathryn Dilkey,  
Katie Wisniewski  
and Erin Rourke  
**Missing:**  
Christina Helms





## Pelvic Health Physical Therapy

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles that create a sling at the base of the pelvis. These muscles stabilize your pelvis, control bowel and bladder movements, enhance sexual function, and support your pelvic organs.

More than half of us will have pelvic health issues in our lifetime. The pelvic floor may be weak or stretched. The muscles may be tight, tense or function poorly. Any of these issues can cause pelvic floor dysfunction.

Common symptoms are:

- pelvic pain
- urinary or fecal leaking
- a strong and sudden urge to go to the bathroom
- a difficult time urinating or passing a bowel movement
- pain or difficulty during sex

The good news is physical therapy can help! The Milwaukee and Green Bay VA have specially trained Pelvic Health Physical Therapists to treat you.

The Physical Therapist can:

- Assess your low back, pelvis, and hips
- Test how key muscles work together with your pelvic floor muscles
- Provide an internal and/or external pelvic floor exam
- Provide hands-on techniques and/or customized exercises
- Educate you on healthy bladder and bowel habits

Discuss any symptoms you may have with your doctor. Be sure to ask for a consult to Pelvic Health Physical Therapy.

## Women's Health Primary Care Services

Women's Health Primary Care (PACT Team) allows you to see multiple health care providers in one visit. A provider, RN, LPN, MSA, Pharmacist, Dietician, Social Worker and Mental Health professional manage your healthcare. Primary Care serves Milwaukee, Green Bay, Union Grove, Cleveland, and Appleton.

Primary Care includes general medical care and preventative care.

- **General medical care** – treats urgent illness and chronic conditions.
  - Urgent: flu, colds, and infections.
  - Chronic conditions: chronic pain, high blood pressure and diabetes.

- **Preventative care** – early measures to prevent disease or conditions.

*Examples:* vaccinations, mammograms, pap smears, colonoscopies, birth control, family planning/counseling, menopause care and osteoporosis screening/care.

Primary Care offers online VA Video Connect (VVC) and phone visits. Interact with your provider from your own home using a smart phone, computer, or tablet.

We know these exams can be difficult for you. We will make you as comfortable as possible. Our team can get you the care you need if not available onsite.





## SCREENING

### Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Clinic

My name is Dr. Amy Farkas, and I run our breast cancer risk assessment clinic at the Milwaukee VA. One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer at some point in their lives. The good news is we have great treatments. Women diagnosed with early breast cancer have excellent survival and cure rates. You can take steps to reduce your risk of breast cancer in several ways.

#### Maintain a healthy lifestyle

We know that being overweight or obese increases risk for breast cancer.

#### Exercise

We also know that exercise can help to reduce breast cancer risk.

#### Reduce Alcohol Intake

Even one glass of alcohol a day has been shown to increase a woman's risk.

### Regular Breast Cancer Screening and Testing

**Screenings help detect early-stage disease when it is more easily treated.**

Age  
40-44

have the option to start screening with a mammogram every year.

Age  
45-54

should get mammograms every year.

Age  
55+

can switch to a every other year, or choose to continue yearly mammograms. *Screening should continue if a woman is in good health and is expected to live at least 10 more years.*

These guidelines apply to average risk women. If you're risk is high, you may benefit from additional screening. For very high-risk women, there are medications that can reduce risk of breast cancer. The breast cancer risk assessment clinic can determine the options that are best for you.

See your primary care provider to learn more about your breast cancer risk and ways to reduce it.

### Mammograms

Mammogram screenings are very important. The VA does not offer on-site mammograms, but they are covered by your VA benefits. Talk to your doctor about a testing schedule that's right for you. Community Care can help set up an appointment at a facility near you!

**Questions?** Contact our Mammogram Coordinator: (414) 384-2000, extension 45004.



## Maternity Care

Your VA now has a Maternity Care Coordinator to guide you through your Maternity care. Services cover conception to postpartum, and community care.

VA maternity services include:

- Routine prenatal tests/assessments
- Prenatal office visits, ultrasounds, labs, and other testing
- Prosthetics if needed (pressure stockings, belly belts)
- Breast feeding support, to include a breast pump, nursing bras, nipple cream, nursing bra pads, milk storage bags, and a lactation consult if needed.
- Pregnancy-related education (birthing/infant care classes, and individual services based on your needs)

Contact your VA Primary Care Provider or the Maternity Care Coordinator for more information: (414)384-2000, extension 46365

## New Pregnancy Education Group

VA offers a new, four-session group for pregnant women called **Healthy Beginnings**. It prepares you for the physical and emotional challenges of pregnancy and having a baby. The sessions are led by a physical therapist and mental health professional who help you learn skills for this special time of life. This includes simple exercises and strategies to manage common symptoms of pregnancy. You'll learn proper body mechanics, labor and delivery positions, and ways to aid recovery after delivery.

The program also includes mental and emotional support through the ROSE program. ROSE stands for Reach Out Stay Strong Essentials. It builds self-care and community care. It teaches communication and goal setting skills. ROSE has been shown to reduce rates of postpartum depression.

Classes meet once a month online. Pregnant women can call the maternity care coordinator if interested.



# ADVENTURES AWAIT



## Female Veteran Baby Shower

Women's Health, in conjunction with Voluntary Service, will host its second Baby Shower for Female Veterans on Friday, August 5, 2022 from 2-3:00 pm at Lake Wheeler (weather permitting).

Our first Baby Shower was last year. The community came together and donated over \$27,000 in cash and baby items. The Milwaukee VA provided a huge tote filled with brand new gifts for new and expecting moms. Staff loaded up the ladies with goodies as they drove through the check point. The moms also received pictures at a photo booth and enjoyed sweet treats too. The event was a great success! Moms not able to attend picked-up their presents from staff later.

If you would like to participate this August, RSVP no later than Friday, July 1st to [katie.wisniewski@va.gov](mailto:katie.wisniewski@va.gov).







## Whole Health

Whole Health is a Veteran-driven approach that puts you at the center of your health care. The process empowers and equips you to take charge of your health and well-being. Whole Health uses 8 areas of well-being:

- Moving the body
- Surroundings
- Personal Development
- Food & Drink
- Recharge
- Relationships
- Spirit & Soul
- Power of the Mind

Are you looking to make a change in any of these areas? Then Whole Health programs are for you. Please join us any of our WH health and wellness groups such as Yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, Skill-Building, Pathway, and more to start living your best life!

### Now offering Women Only groups:

#### **Women Only – Taking Charge of My Life and Health** (9-week group)

Discover new skills to better manage your health while focusing on what's important in your life.

#### **Women Only – Group or Individual Health Coaching** (8-weeks).

Develop a personal health plan based on what matters most to you. Health coaches support you to achieve your goals based on your preferences and lifestyle.

For more information, contact  
(414) 384-2000, extension 43611.

## Women's Healthy Teaching Kitchen

The Healthy Teaching Kitchen (HTK) is a series of cooking classes that provide nutrition knowledge, cooking skills, and guided practice. Its purpose is to build Veteran confidence in cooking healthy meals at home.

The Milwaukee VA offers two different series of HTK Classes. HTK Basics is open to all enrolled Veterans while Women's Health HTK is for female Veterans only.

Both series are held online with VA Video Connect (VVC). HTK supports hands-on practice as Veterans cook along with the instructor. Learn new cooking techniques or polish your old skills. Prepare and enjoy delicious, healthy recipes. Women Veterans who complete the full 4-week series of Women HTK Classes can receive a Healthy Cooking Toolkit (*while supplies last*).

### **To enroll, contact:**

Sandy Raguse  
(414) 384-2000, extension 47387





## MY HEALTHeVET

---

My HealtheVet is an online site that allows you 24-hour access to your essential health and military records. Uploaded records can be safely and securely shared with providers, family members, or caregivers.

You can:

- Refill, track, and view your medications
- Schedule/track medical appointments
- Contact your health team or other VA staff for non-emergency needs
- View, print, download or enter your own medical health information
- Take a health assessment
- Get health and wellness resources

To set up your account or for questions, please contact:

**My HEALTHeVET Coordinator**

(414) 384-2000, extension 42141

**[www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)**



## YOUR OPINION MATTERS

Partner with us to shape the Women's Health program in the future. Join us for our focus group held every 3 months. Your opinions, ideas, and feelings matter. We value your feedback to help us improve the program to better meet your needs.

Email us to be placed on our list if you like future notifications:

**IAMAFEMALEVETERAN@va.gov**

Stay in Touch with the latest news



## Intimate Partner Violence

The VA cares about Veterans affected by Intimate Partner Violence. Intimate Partner Violence is a public health problem that affects Veterans at a high rate. The VA Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP) serves Veterans, family members and VA employees affected by Intimate Partner Violence. IPVAP promotes relationship health and wellness. The program aids healing and growth for Veterans dealing with IPV. IPVAP aims to reduce conflict, support health, and improve health and quality of life. All of these are necessary for good physical and mental health.

We encourage Veterans, their partners, and VA staff to talk with their local IPVAP Coordinator for available resources and services. Together we can make a difference.

Please contact Andrea Knowlton, LCSW for more information:  
(414) 384-2000, extension 43874







# Tell Us About Your Experience!

VA provides quality healthcare to our national Veterans, and we are committed to ***Owning the Moment*** to make every encounter a positive patient experience! Your feedback is essential in helping your VA serve you better. You may receive a short survey from VA asking about your experience if you provided your email address.

## Benefits of surveys:

- Submissions are “real-time” allowing us to see your feedback quickly.
- We are able to make things right if we did not meet your expectations.
- Patient feedback on employees improves morale and recognition opportunities.

## You may receive surveys for your experience in the following areas:

- Outpatient Primary Care
- Outpatient Specialty Care Community Care
- Emergency Medical Care
- Telehealth Care
- COVID-19

## Have concerns about your experience?

Our Milwaukee VA has a Patient Advocate Office that can help with:

- Hospital policy and procedure
- Concerns
- Compliments
- Recommendations for improvement

Advocates are available by phone Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
(414) 384-2000 or (toll free) 1-888-469-6614, extension 42604







## **IMPORTANT NUMBERS**

### **Community Care Scheduling**

(414) 384-2000, extension 45252

### **Community Care Billing**

(844) 839-6120

### **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)**

1-800-827-1000

### **Women Veteran Call Center**

1-855-829-6636

### **Women Veteran Program Manager**

(414) 384-2000, extension 45795



@MilwaukeeVA

VHE 0250  
6/2022 KC